

Statement Regarding Civil Conduct and Civil Discourse

The magnitude of the problems facing our university, country, and world stimulate strongly-held, even passionate, opinions. At UCLA, we welcome strenuous and searching debate. In so doing, it is important to be mindful of our values, which underscore the need for mutual respect and civility between those who disagree.

Critical analysis, free expression, and informed debate lie at the heart of academic freedom and are essential to healthy environment of learning in the university. We deeply cherish these values and the knowledge and learning that they produce.

In championing academic freedom, we must be mindful that these values can only flourish when conducted with civility and tolerance for different views and differing interpretations of facts. We can and should feel passionately about ideas, without letting our passions overwhelm reason and good sense and drive us to be uncivil, rude, or hurtful. We can debate without belittling our opponents, and we can certainly expect the same treatment from others. Civil debate also requires the highest standards of academic rigor. We do not advance knowledge – our fundamental mission – when the positions expressed lack a strong theoretical or empirical foundation, and when we close ourselves off to competing views.

These standards should apply across the campus – within classes, workshops, lectures, conferences, and other community settings both formal and informal. Practically speaking, it is important that conveners help participants – audience members as well as speakers – understand the importance of the free and civil exchange of ideas and establish an environment that enables this. Otherwise, debate has ended and academic freedom is imperiled.

As a public institution UCLA is fully committed to academic freedom and to the free expression of ideas in a manner congruent with the highest standards of scholarly pursuits. Anything less, anything that inhibits those pursuits should be discouraged in the strongest possible terms.

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